

MONOGRAPH

YEAR 4. VOL. 2



A STUDENT LED MAGAZINE FOR THE ARTS



MONOGRAPH

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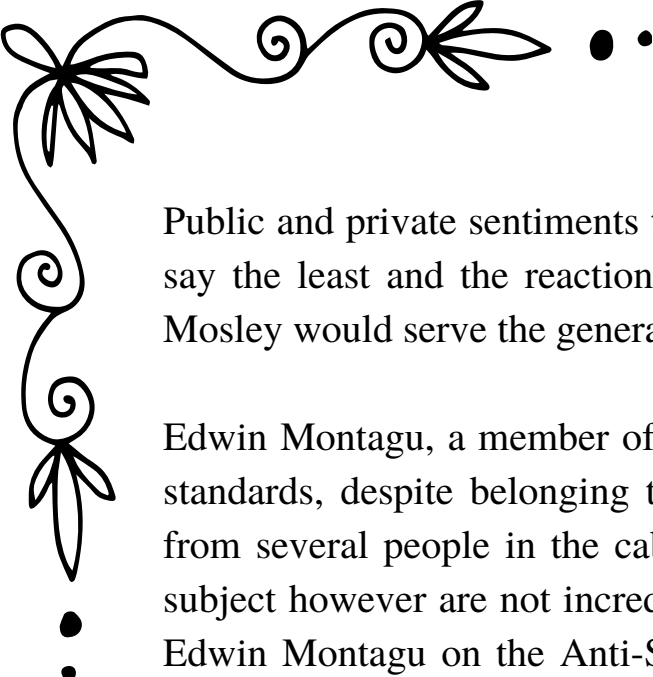


Editor's Note



In 1896, Theodore Herzl, considered to be the father of modern Zionism and the Visionary of the State of Israel, argued in *Der Judenstaat* that antisemitism existed in all nations and the only panacea to this festering wound of religious persecution was, “Let them give us sovereignty over a piece of the Earth's surface, just sufficient for the needs of our people, then we will do the rest!” Herzl’s beliefs and writings on the Judean homeland influenced public sentiment to such an extent that in 1948, when Israel was declared a State by David Ben-Gurion, it was done so under a gigantic picture of Herzl. He was not the first Zionist, but his writings on the Foundation of a Jewish nation led directly to the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which, released in the middle of the First World War, saw the British Parliament offer unwavering support to the foundation of an Israeli State in Palestine - a nation that fell under the ambit of the Ottoman Empire.

In Herbert Samuel’s 1915 Memorandum, also called *The Future of Palestine*, he stated “the course which is advocated would win for England the gratitude of the Jews throughout the world”. Leaving aside the indulgent insinuations of the name of the memorandum, this noted the first time in any written war document that enlisting Jewish support as a military measure was suggested, and 2 years later the infamous letter, after several revisions from Balfour, was sent to Lionel Walter Rothschild, 2nd Baron and a leading Zionist, outlining the Future of Palestine.

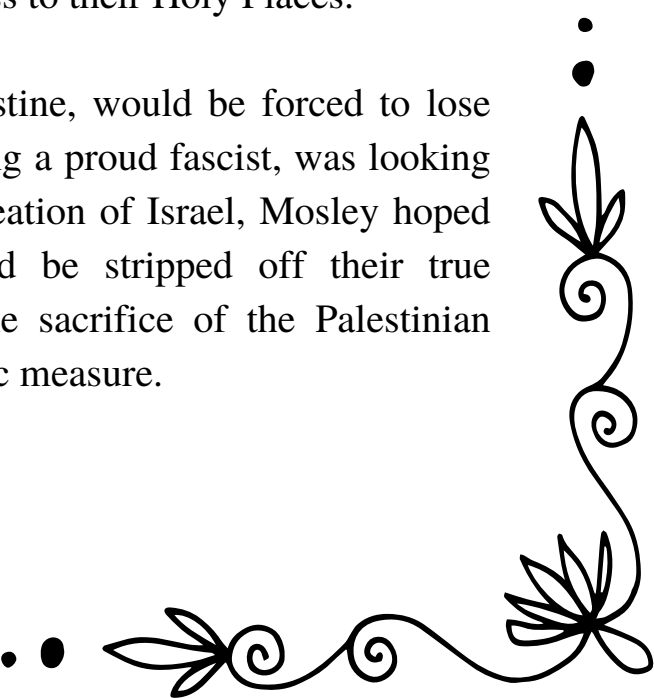


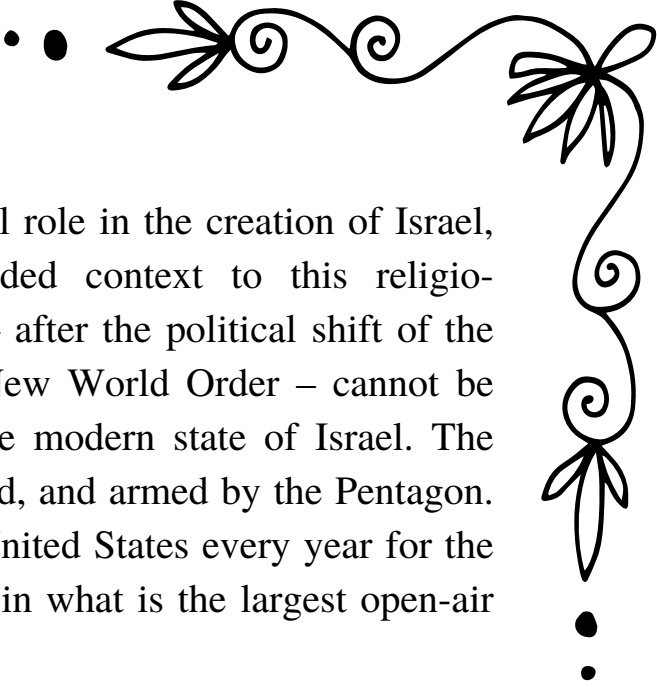
Public and private sentiments to the declaration in this era are both interesting to say the least and the reactions of two cabinet members- namely Montagu and Mosley would serve the general populace well to remember.

Edwin Montagu, a member of the Privy Council and a radical liberal by British standards, despite belonging to the Judean faith himself, drew heavy criticism from several people in the cabinet for his anti-zionist stance. His views on the subject however are not incredibly complex; in a memo titled “Memorandum of Edwin Montagu on the Anti-Semitism of the Present (British) Government”, it becomes incredibly clear that in his mind the Christian Briton’s support for the creation of the State of Israel came not as a means to end anti-semitism but rather was a product of it. In his mind Palestine, which played a role in Judean religious history, did so for their Christian and Muslim counterparts as well. The Temple might have been in Palestine, but so was the crucifixion of Christ.

Now, Oswald Mosley, Member of Parliament and the founder of the British Union of Fascists, came later. His first stint in the House started in 1918, after the Balfour Declaration, but what never changed in the 80 years of his life as a career politician was his opinion on Israel for which he enjoyed complete support. He writes, “For over two thousand years the Jews have asked for a national home, and sought again to become a nation To this end I propose the partition of Palestine and the placing of Jerusalem under a super-national authority which will afford Christian, Arab and Jew impartial access to their Holy Places.”

Montagu’s belief that Jews, once shifted to Palestine, would be forced to lose their true nationality, was something Mosley, being a proud fascist, was looking forward to . While speaking favourably of the creation of Israel, Mosley hoped that those belonging to the Jewish faith could be stripped off their true nationalities, and reduced to Israeli citizens. The sacrifice of the Palestinian people thus became a byproduct of this anti-semitic measure.

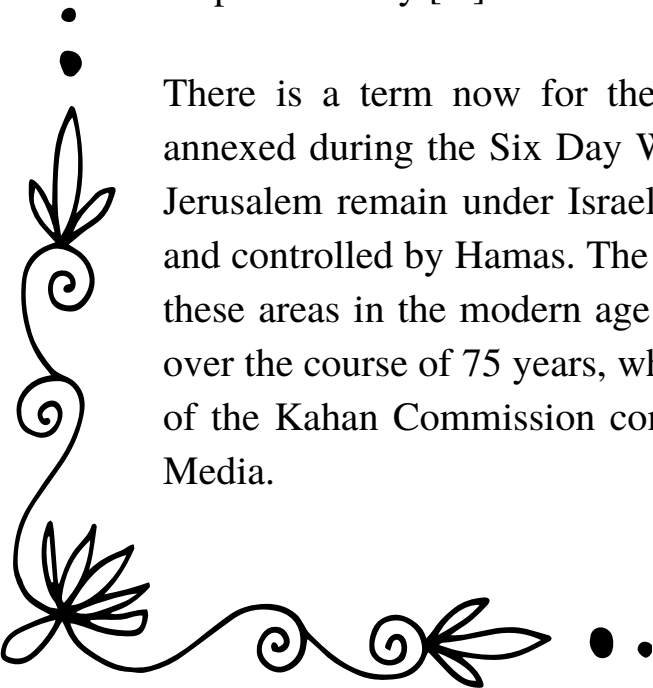




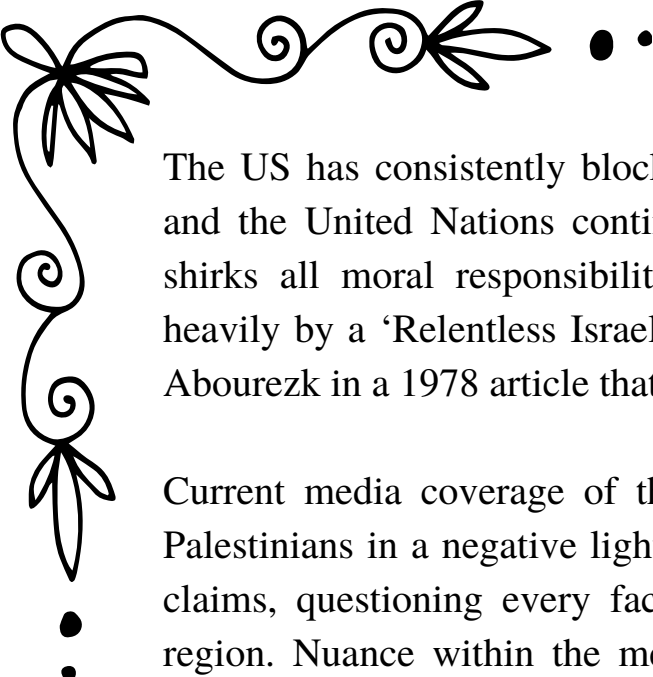
While the history of Britain played a foundational role in the creation of Israel, with the two Statesmen providing much needed context to this religio-geopolitical mess, the role of the United States – after the political shift of the World Zionist movement in 1947 towards the New World Order – cannot be understated when it comes to the creation of the modern state of Israel. The Defence forces of Israel are sanctioned, bankrolled, and armed by the Pentagon. Billions of dollars are provided to Israel by the United States every year for the Jewish state to maintain their walls around Gaza in what is the largest open-air prison in the world.

Quite unsurprisingly, Israel found itself in a war the very year it was founded and the very next year, the C.I.A published a classified journal titled “The Current Situation in Israel” that outlined Israel’s expansionist policies. It reads:

“...On the question of Israel's frontiers, the Arabs and Jews are as divided as on the refugee question. During the course of the fighting Israel occupied considerable territory allocated to the Arabs under the General Assembly partition plan, i.e.: Western Galilee, a broad strip between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Jaffa, and areas on the Dead Sea and the Egyptian frontiers. Under the terms of the armistice agreement with Jordan, Israel took over additional territory in central Palestine. On top of all these gains Israel has now publicly stated that it would like to obtain the Gaza strip from Egypt, additional areas in central Palestine and around Jerusalem from Jordan, and possibly at some future date a strip of territory [in] southern Lebanon.”



There is a term now for these territories- Israel Occupied Territories that it annexed during the Six Day War of 1967. Golan Heights, West Bank, and East Jerusalem remain under Israeli Occupation. Gaza Strip, as of now, is contested and controlled by Hamas. The reason behind their ability to exercise control over these areas in the modern age is Western support. Israeli war crimes committed over the course of 75 years, which are too many to mention although the findings of the Kahan Commission come to mind, have largely been ignored by Global Media.

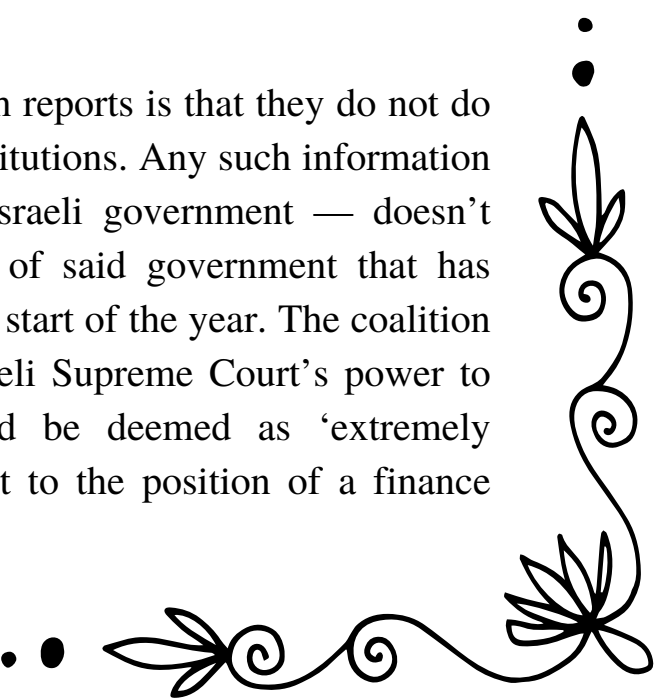


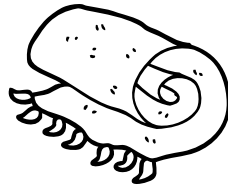
The US has consistently blocked possible solutions to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the United Nations continues to do so, and the method through which it shirks all moral responsibilities is mass propaganda. It has been leaned on heavily by a ‘Relentless Israeli Propaganda Machine,’ as termed by Sen. James Abourezk in a 1978 article that was declassified by the CIA in 2004.

Current media coverage of the situation in Gaza is often skewed and paints Palestinians in a negative light, casting a dark shadow of doubt over all of their claims, questioning every facet of information that comes out of the coastal region. Nuance within the media’s use of language is important to dissect to understand the current agenda setting. To describe the ongoing series of events as Israel’s retaliation against the October 7 attacks from Hamas would be a gross mis-judgement of reality. The situation is nothing short of neo-colonial ethnic genocide dating all the way back to Israel’s conception as a sovereign Zionist state within the British mandate for Palestine.

Every mention of Palestinian institutions in Gaza contains the phrase ‘Hamas-run’ as a prefix; the current narrative uses such simple qualifiers to keep reminding readers about who controls the information coming out of Gaza. Hamas, a politico-extremist militant group, had invaded Israel in the midst of the latter’s political and administrative instability, and had killed around 1400 civilians and soldiers, taking more than 200 hostages. In response, Israel escalated its bombing campaign on Gaza, killing more than 8000 civilians at present.

The bone of contention within the wording of such reports is that they do not do the same for information coming out of Israeli institutions. Any such information — while labelled as being obtained from the Israeli government — doesn’t mention the far-right coalition group in charge of said government that has violated the norms of its own democracy since the start of the year. The coalition had passed a bill in July that took away the Israeli Supreme Court’s power to strike down any government action that could be deemed as ‘extremely unreasonable’, such as Aryeh Deri’s appointment to the position of a finance minister after having been convicted of tax fraud.





In an emergency meeting called by the UN on October 25th, Riyad Mansour, Palestinian Ambassador to the UN, said, “[Israel] believes if you say Hamas enough times, the world will not be able to object to wiping [entire families] from the face of the Earth.” Current reports toe the line between ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ by playing with meaning and articulation. The media’s narrative claims on the Israel-Palestine conflict have been, and continue to be, determined by the United States of America – its stakes and priorities, and thus the claims it makes and espouses. Not in policy abstractions lost to jargon, but in the active framing of ‘what is happening’. There is a blanket of ignorance that the current media landscape seems to shroud their narrative in: a blanket that conveniently leaves out all Israeli acts of terror and neo-colonialism that has plagued millions since the first Aliyah.

Obfuscation lies at the heart of these tactics: in conducting a limited assessment of particular crucial media reports, the biased characterisation of concerned individuals and organisations become jarringly evident. Both *Reuters* and *Associated Press* have articles on ‘what’/‘who’ Hamas is. A *Reuters*’s piece published on the 7th of October, comprises a bulleted list with this brief preface: “The Palestinian group Hamas has launched a surprise attack from Gaza into Israel, in one of the most serious escalations in the Israel-Palestinian conflict in years.” The piece by *AP News*, published on October 16, begins thus:

“Hamas, which has ruled the Gaza Strip since 2007, launched an attack inside Israel over the weekend, killing hundreds and taking others hostage. Its unprecedented breach of the border sent fighters inside border communities and military installations, shocked Israel and its allies, and raised questions about the group’s capabilities and strategy.”

A reading of only one of these reports would lend itself to two starkly different imaginaries of Hamas and of the situation on-ground. Before we are told “What is Hamas?”, *AP News* sets its brush against an already-bloody canvas: this is a group with questionable capabilities and strategies, ruthless and uncontrollable in its actions, forcing violent rebukes. If one has no bearings in the context of Israel’s genocidal occupation in Palestine, Hamas becomes the space of cohering an ‘overwhelming’ and ‘divided’ rhetoric. The narrative then goes on to clearly set “The U.S. State Department ... [as well as the European Union] and other Western countries” in opposition to “Arab and Muslim countries, such as Qatar and Turkey [and, recently,] Iran and its allies.”

There is no narrative space for the Palestinian civilian here; they are metonymized. *The New York Times*’ “A Diary of Despair” provides “an audio diary” of a 19-year-old teenager in Gaza: Tasneem Ismael Ahel is living through her fifth war and her despair and helplessness offer “a window into the unimaginable ways her daily life intersects with the horrors of war.” These horrors are only safe to think about in the story of an individual ‘struggle’: these are not the horrors inflicted by Israelis, these are the horrors of a ‘condition’ of war. The writer follows this paragraph with another reminder that when “this round of fighting began”, Hamas killed “mostly civilians”. *The NYT* tries to make Tasneem an easy symbol of war’s ruthlessness in the abstract, of what wars do — not this one, not with a singular culprit. There is no way a Palestinian civilian can actually exist, only in “unimaginable ways,” for within the Western narrative, their identity is perpetually expository.

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ON BEING A DAUGHTER

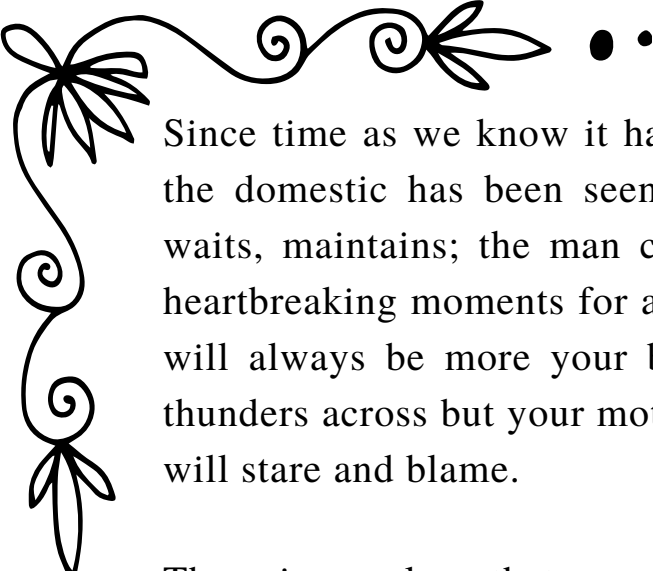


URVIE BHATTACHARYA

When I was young, I used to listen to Bengali music beside my father, and listen to the conversations float around, only for unsaid words to suspend themselves in the air between people that had forgotten how to love each other. I can't point when I realised I did not love my father as much as I felt guilt over not loving him as I should - love out of fear, of how much I'd hate that I didn't love him if I stopped. The Indian family is characterised by deception, the pretence of tenderness that can only inspire regret; of watching people you love turn into those you know you won't be able to love further.

My family tree doesn't have as many branches as it does fallen leaves - some lay scattered at its feet, some have begun to turn crisp and are ripe to fall; others cling to the bark because the ground is cold and they fear what lies outside comfort. But comfort can often blend into stagnation before we realise we are on its fine threshold. Home seems to be the first place where people, relationships and love start to rot; and long before we realise it, all we eat at the dinner table are dreams of light, as we stare at the corpse of what could've been.



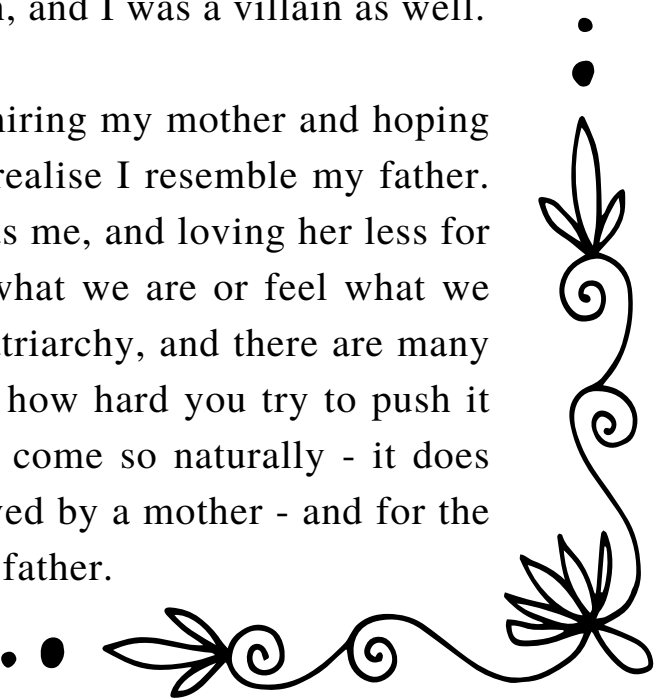


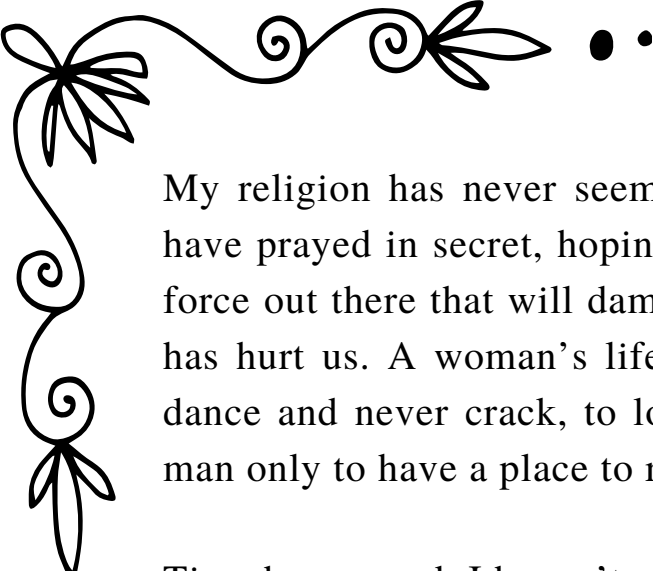
Since time as we know it has existed, the public has belonged to men and the domestic has been seen as the domain of the feminine. The woman waits, maintains; the man creates and projects forward. One of the most heartbreaking moments for a woman is to come home only to realise that it will always be more your brother's - to walk on floors that your father thunders across but your mother has cleaned; and walk on roads where eyes will stare and blame.

There is no place that a woman can belong to, only where she has come from and where she will go, mere structures that don't seem to have places for mothers, daughter or wives except at the edge - where even if you stumble, there is nowhere to fall but into another place that cannot house you. The pain of being a daughter is a precursor to the yearning that characterises womanhood - of equality, respect, love and worth.

My young years seem like they will stagnate and rot under the venom of hurt from memory. Children are so impressionable - childhood stays and shapes. I don't know if I'll ever be able to forget and forgive, but I know I won't really ever be able to separate my life from the travesty the prior portion of my life was. Most of a woman's youth is recognition, of her helplessness, of the fact that her father is less a saint and more of a monster; what he is to her mother is what shapes the peculiarities of the fear of masculinity a woman will harbour for the rest of her years. Yet, I was my father's daughter before I was a woman, and I was a villain as well.

A daughter's youth is of growing up while admiring my mother and hoping I become her - only to look in the mirror and realise I resemble my father. It is watching my mother's heart harden towards me, and loving her less for it, knowing that neither of us intended to be what we are or feel what we do. That is the one of the truest tragedies of patriarchy, and there are many - it taints relations between women, no matter how hard you try to push it out of those boundaries. Hatred and suspicion come so naturally - it does not feel like I have ever loved or have been loved by a mother - and for the longest time, I've wished I could forget I had a father.

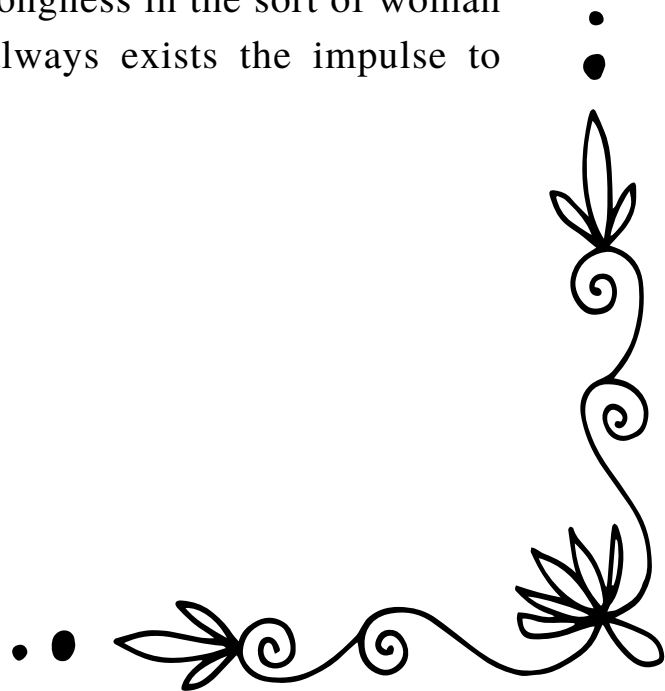




My religion has never seemed to have space for us either. All my life, I have prayed in secret, hoping and wishing that I was wrong; that there is a force out there that will damn, even if it is not above and free from all that has hurt us. A woman's life is characterised by the pain she can bear, to dance and never crack, to love and never expect any back, to belong to a man only to have a place to run from, never to.

Time has passed. I haven't spoken to my father in years. I do not know how to forgive men for faults they are not aware they have, nor for believing that I am one of them. There is no scope for redemption anymore, only a wish that there was never a need for one. Some nights I lay awake hoping, telling my father, "Come home. Come as a version of you I don't have to forgive. Come home without all the things we can never go back from." I tell the women that have suffered and gone before me, "Turn around, come back. I'm older now. I'll save you this time. If I can't, you at least will not have to look at the world just watch."

Daughters, mothers and wives tolerate, to the end of the line, teetering and struggling to find a balance between all the women they have to be and what is expected of them. You spend your entire life tiptoeing across this very rope, you forget to look down and realise that there never was one - only a void that has built into itself both the silence and screams of women; to realise that the punishment is not for the wrongness in the sort of woman you are, it is for your being itself. There always exists the impulse to punish the daughter for not having been a son.





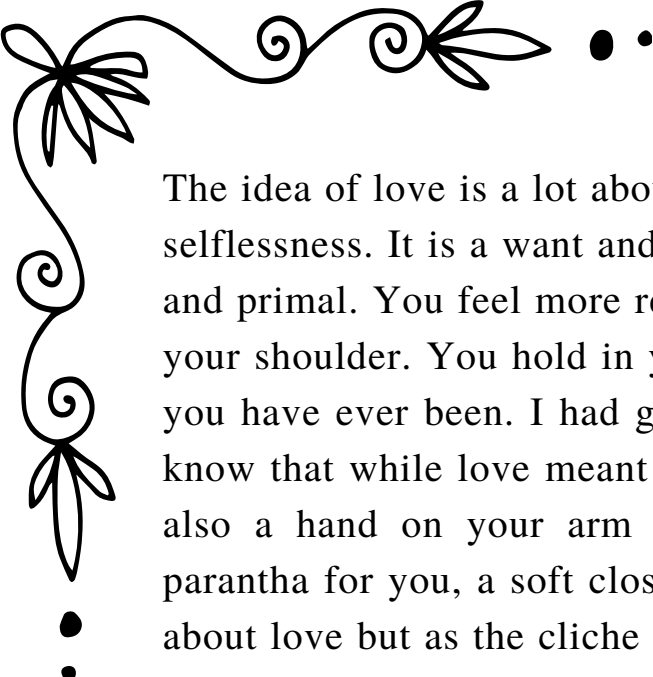
DO WE REALLY BELIEVE IN SHAH RUKH KHAN ANYMORE?



SAKHI SINGH

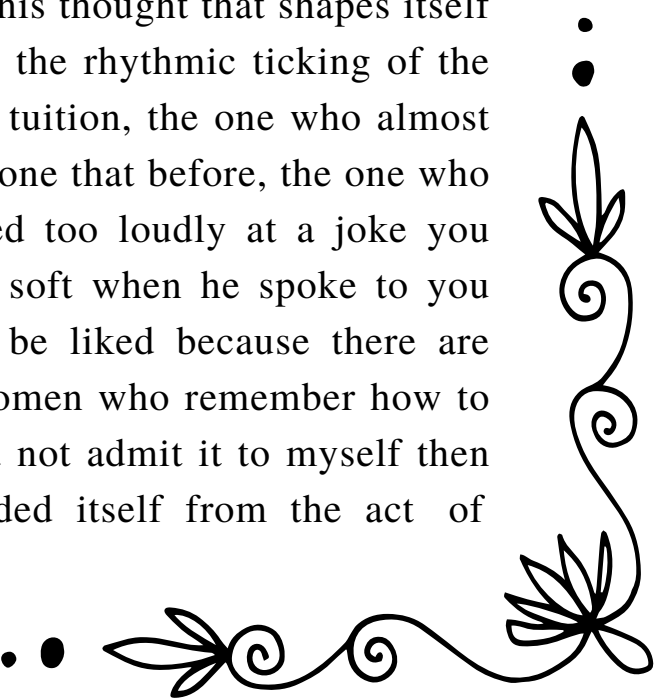
I was 14 when I realized how hearing Shah Rukh Khan say, "aapki halwaai ki dukaan toh main hadapke hee rahunga " made me make a million embarrassing scenarios where I was in Kajol's place. It did not take me long to understand exactly what I wanted. In the midst of all the heroes or men at large that prided themselves on their muscular strength, I wanted a dream of a man who would swoon and fall over when I wore a saree, whose voice would get softer when he spoke to me, who would wait for me to run to him in a field of sunflowers. I wanted a city that was bathed in the ittar of roses and tulips, of lilacs and lavenders. I wanted my home to be lined with diyas and candles and the only way I thought I could achieve this was by having a man who made me laugh as we walked in the rain.





The idea of love is a lot about gaining a sense of wholeness, belonging and selflessness. It is a want and a hunger to touch and to be touched. It is raw and primal. You feel more real when someone dozes off with their head on your shoulder. You hold in your breath, more alert of your movement than you have ever been. I had gorged myself on enough Bollywood movies to know that while love meant running across the airport for someone, it was also a hand on your arm when you catch yourself stumbling, a spare parantha for you, a soft close for a long day. I could write so many things about love but as the cliché goes, my eyes were roving to the left and right to find a muse. I was an untidy teenager who was already surrounded by girls who had reached their womanhood. The perceived idea of beauty had tightened itself around my neck like a noose. My short hair had given it way too much room to successfully curl itself into the hollow of my collarbone.

You can try to tell yourself that at the end of the day what matters is the kindness you possess or the jokes you crack or the fact that you have studied well in school or that you might have written a book or that you finally gathered the courage to talk without letting your hands tremble in a room full of people. You can try to think a lot about what is on the inside rather than the outside but eventually when you are lying alone on your bed beneath your fan, when the heat of the summer night sticks to your clothes and trickles down your skin, you are left with this thought that shapes itself like a ringing opaque room in your chest with the rhythmic ticking of the clock. The first boy you liked in your English tuition, the one who almost made you drop your pen when you had never done that before, the one who made your cheeks heat up because he laughed too loudly at a joke you made under your breath, whose voice did go soft when he spoke to you might not like you in the way you want to be liked because there are women with longer hair and thinner waists, women who remember how to be graceful even after they fall asleep. I could not admit it to myself then but I know it now. Love, for me, had transcended itself from the act of

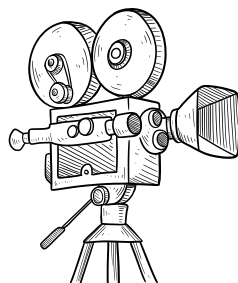


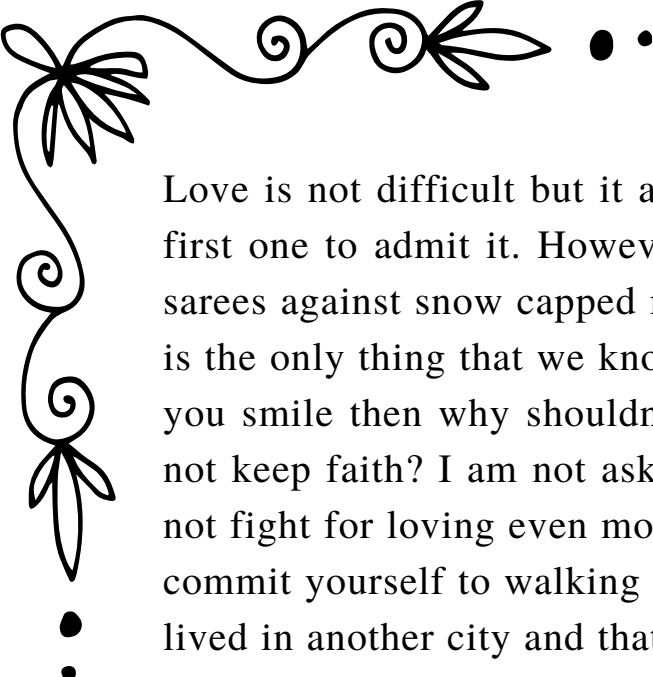
Love has been my strongest and weakest pursuit. I have claimed to understand it while knowing absolutely nothing about it. I had sown a hide for myself. I had bartered my spine for something 'great'. I had covered every mirror in my house with my own disgust, convincing myself that love was a prize you gain after peeling the grime off yourself.

You grow out of your teenage and you realize that perhaps Shah Rukh Khan is a concept that helps us sleep at night, that probably he is an imagination only meant for safekeeping because it's difficult to admit that there are people who will slip their tongues down your throats even when you don't want them to. You will begin to keep grains of love in the palm of your hand.

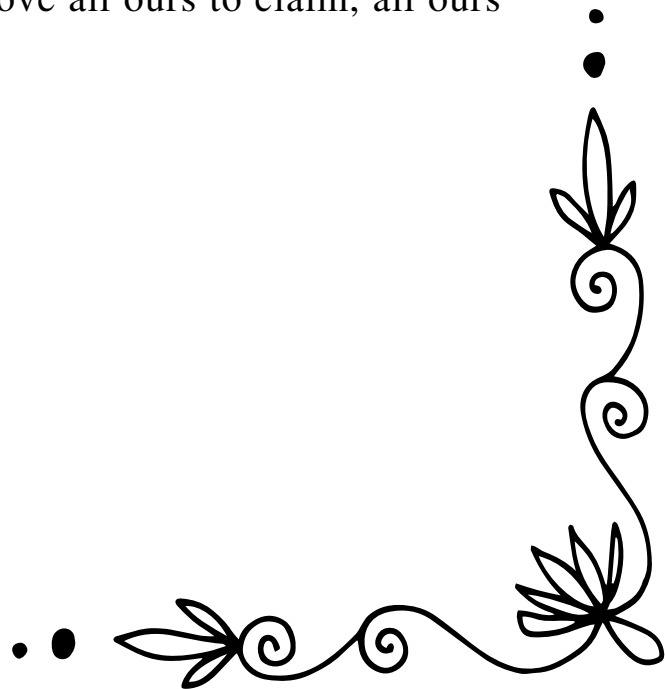
You are no longer conventional. You like people, you want the time of their day, you want to be tempted. There is always a game, a tantalizing bait and now you're armed with newer words to 'save' your heart from getting broken, a name for this distance that you've created situation-ships, friends with benefits. Dating apps are a menace, there are way too many options. You roll your eyes as you swipe to the left and right, barely dodging a small talk that stretches its limbs from the Monday of this week to the Friday of the next.

You tell yourself that you do not care about anything while you keep your hand close to your heart as you sigh at the rows and rows of carnations at a nearby florist's. The dream behind your eyes does not stop. You become tired of holding your breath. There are just way too many rules to look unfazed but there is only one Shahrukh who opens a blank diary and dissolves the butterflies in his stomach into your cup of chai while you snuggle into your blanket. His voice is trembling but he remains steadfast, *"Mere naina meri naina ko dhoondhte hain"*.





Love is not difficult but it also is. This is because nobody wants to be the first one to admit it. However, I've watched the striking colors of chiffon sarees against snow capped mountains a little too closely to say that loving is the only thing that we know best. If watching Shahrukh on screen makes you smile then why shouldn't you become one yourself? Why should you not keep faith? I am not asking you to hold the flame of a candle but why not fight for loving even more when it does come around? Why should you commit yourself to walking on your toes? I once sent flowers to a boy who lived in another city and that gave me more happiness than turning my face away from him. Love makes you a fool. It makes you do things that you never thought you would do like kissing the rising sun. You feel your face turning red every now and then because you saw them smiling at you. Your day might be swirling in the ashes of a dirty maroon but love will leave you with a baby blue beneath your fingers which is also to say that love is a memory that stays with you, that reminds you that after everything that passes there will always be a face in the crowd that will look back at you, a home for you to come back to. Isn't it worth it to become a little more like Richard Gere in Pretty Woman who ultimately gave a damn about his fear of heights and climbed the stairs to Julia Roberts's balcony to tell her that he would stay. I hope we pause a little more and run a little less. I hope we are able to make batches of cookies and cakes in our kitchens because love will sneak up on us and before we know it, our hearts will be on the tips of our fingers, all our measuring cups broken, a love all ours to claim, all ours to become.





DEVOURING BODIES AND PLACES: REMEMBERING DESIRE AND THE LIFE OF MEMORY



SUKRITI CHAWLA

In his *The Task of the Translator*, Walter Benjamin writes: “The concept of life is given its due only if everything that has a history of its own, and is not merely the setting for history, is credited with life.” It is in fathoming what is life and what is credited with life that I read *Hiroshima Mon Amour* as conducting its negotiations of bodies and memories: from its very first frames, as well as in the crescendos of its opening music, the film acknowledges the jaggedness of the lovers’ narrativization. The edges of one’s memories come in contact with, and brush against, those of others – the sharp cuts establish that this is not a ‘simple’ story: neither easily told nor easily understood.

The French actress and the Japanese architect are not named; however, the cast information given by most catalogues of the film term them “Elle” and “Lui” – literally, Her and Him in French. The borders of identity, memory and body are contentious in *Hiroshima*, and their contingencies are located first on the ‘validity’ of acts of remembering: “You saw nothing in *Hiroshima*. Nothing.” / “I saw the hospital, I’m sure of it, it exists. How could I not have seen it?” I refer to Benjamin in order to look at their encounter as made possible through translation. Although the ‘object’ of this translation is difficult to pin down, I read its work as undertaken when the characters’ stories of a particular moment in their time ‘come together’, and what it does to the memories themselves as well as to the bodies in/of it.

Memory here is understood through Rothberg's articulation of its multidirectionality: it possesses a "powerful creativity," the source of which lies in "its bringing together of now and then, here and there." This 'holding together' bestows memory with the capacity "to build new worlds out of the materials of older ones". There is a generative, productive force that memory possesses, and *Hiroshima Mon Amour* provides one such instantiation of the 'product' of memory in the body. The 'production' here is not to be understood as a linearity or finality in the sense of timelines of creation; rather, the body and self are perpetually done, undone and redone in or through memory.

To understand memory as "a shared medium within which alone individuals can remember or articulate themselves" provides space for the contingency of being an individual inhabiting a body. When Elle flirtatiously tells Lui, "I don't mind being a thousand women in one for you.", she uses the freedom of playfulness to somewhat hesitantly and deniably point towards the corollary that we soon see unfold: he is not 'just' (if at all) him, *Lui*, for her. He is the German soldier, his hands are of a dead man's – his body becomes the place where she is able to fathom Hiroshima beyond the narrative of her mourning, where she can remap (Rothberg) her memory, and, as she tells us, her body.

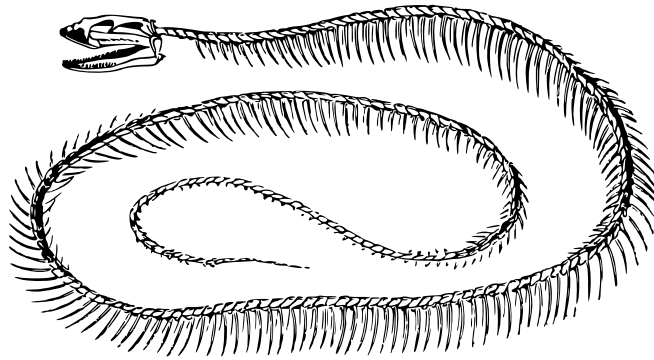




Towards the end of the film, we witness Elle walking through the streets of this city that has been made to stand in for the memory which suspended her life, her body:

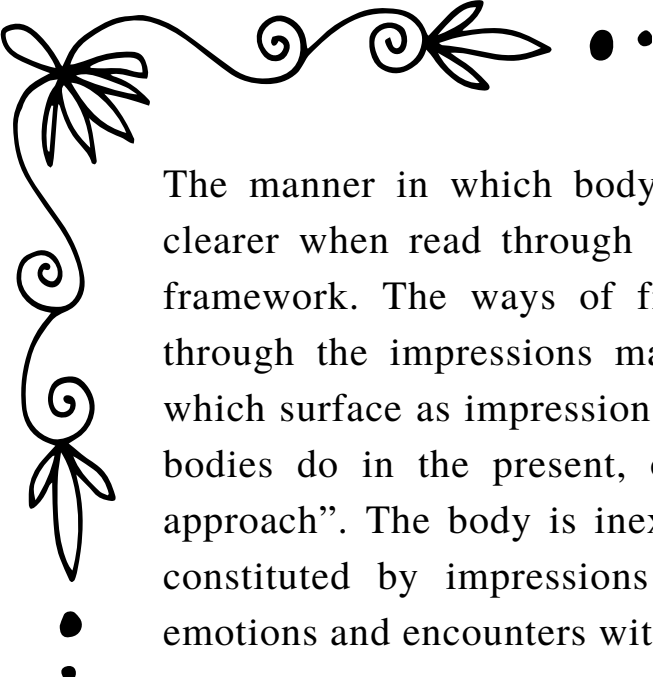
“I meet you. I remember you. ... Who are you? You’re destroying me. I was hungry. Hungry for infidelity, for adultery, for lies, and for death. I always have been. I had no doubt you’d cross my path one day. I waited for you calmly, with boundless impatience. Devour me. Deform me to your likeness, so that no one after you will ever again understand the reason for so much desire. ... There’ll be nothing else for us to do but mourn the departed day. Time will pass. Only time. And a time will come when we can no longer name what it is that binds us. Its name will be gradually erased from our memory until it vanishes completely.”

I quote this at excessive length for there are several telling phrases useful to orient an understanding of what the two lovers come to mean to each other, what the places they have inhabited and now find each other in do to them, to the stories of their lives and of each other – who/what are they, who/what do they become? Rothberg’s “inevitable displacements and contingencies that mark all remembrance” become readable in the form of *Hiroshima Mon Amour* – both the style of its cinematography (the use of sharp cuts between scenes is one such exemplification of this, its effect noted earlier) as well as the bodies that inhabit the scape of the film.



Speaking to its most recent restoration, New York Film Festival director Kent Jones called attention to “the film’s refusal ‘to resist a comforting sense of definition’,” recalling Resnais’s anxiety about this when he’d first begun shooting, “He was convinced that his film was going to fall apart, but the irony is that he and Duras had never meant for it to come together in the first place.” It is crucial to read the film’s narrative indiscernibility at particular points as testament to the difficulty of relating memories – the unsettling effect of a montage that pans from shots of lovers’ entangled bodies to those disfigured in the wake of war foreshadows Elle’s memory of Hiroshima, the associations particular to her and instrumental in her experience of the space ‘today’.

When she calls for her lover to deform her to his likeness (which is in itself an interpretation; we never hear her address any-one/thing/place in these voiceovers – perhaps she speaks to Hiroshima the place as she demands and accuses), there are two things at play: likeness and reconstitution. In desiring and being subject to desire, one is consumed and remade – there is a part of her that has been affected so deeply by him (his memory, their story; his body, her body with his) that it is unrecognizable to anyone but him, and she wants him to carry this act to fulfilment. To be subject to being fathomed and remembered by him and him alone, the ‘rearticulation’ conducted by memory takes on an acutely corporeal form: his memory has altered her being so profoundly that she desires her material – arguably, physical, emotional and *intelligible* – existence to reflect it.

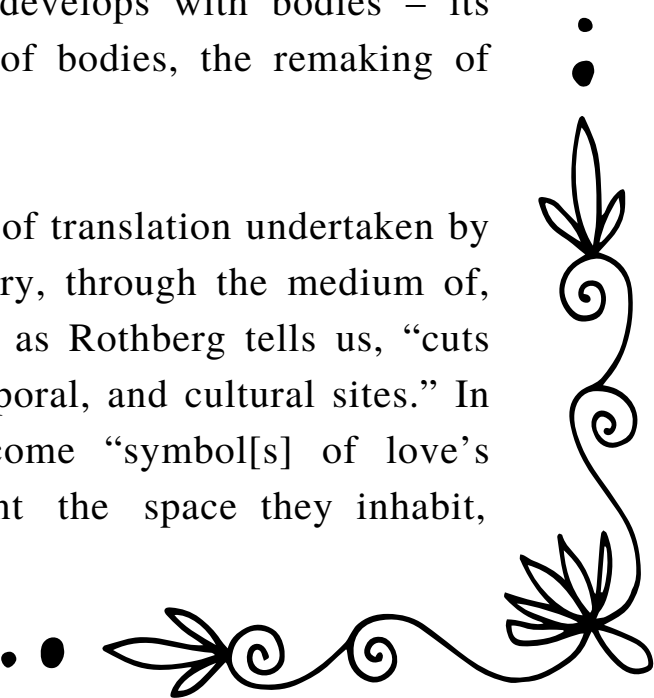


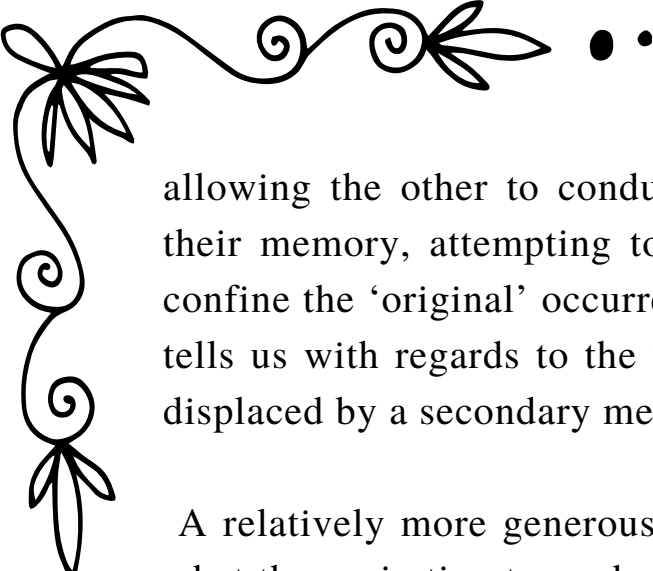
The manner in which body and memory relate to one another becomes clearer when read through Sara Ahmed's articulation of orientation as a framework. The ways of finding one's way in the world is delineated through the impressions made by objects, "dependent on past histories, which surface as impressions on the skin," and emotions' shaping of "what bodies do in the present, or how they are moved by the objects they approach". The body is inextricable from memory and inhabitation – it is constituted by impressions of the past, and subject to the doings of emotions and encounters with objects in the present.

When Elle calls to being alone with the one she speaks of, the who/which subject to this solitude seems to lack distinct boundaries: "We'll be alone, my love. Night will never end. The day will never dawn again on *anyone*." Why does the condition of the lovers' aloneness in the night preclude every other creature from dawn too? Elle's 'orientation' to the world, then, is mediated through, or perhaps even contained in, her orientation to the lover: his memory and body – her memory of their bodies together.

Elaborating upon how the "where" of a body's dwelling is not exterior to the body itself, Ahmed writes that "spaces are like a second skin that unfolds in the folds of the body." Their endeavour at a queer phenomenology then, I argue, is salient and greatly beneficial to understanding the relationship that memory develops with bodies – its contingencies, the negotiations between and of bodies, the remaking of each by the other.

Hiroshima Mon Amour demonstrates the work of translation undertaken by acts of remembrance and narratives of memory, through the medium of, among other things, the body. Remembrance, as Rothberg tells us, "cuts across and binds together diverse spatial, temporal, and cultural sites." In one reading, the man and the woman become "symbol[s] of love's forgetfulness" (*Hiroshima*) – they represent the space they inhabit,

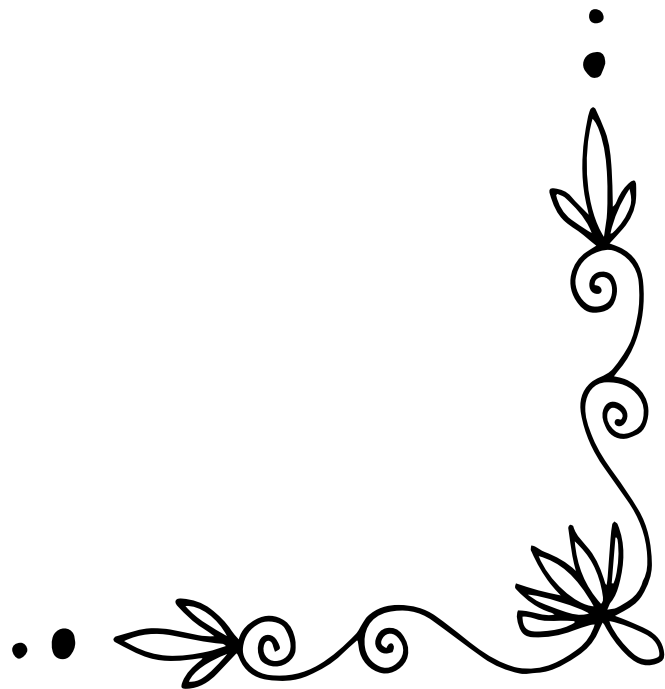


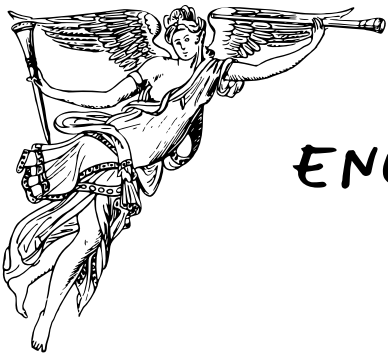


allowing the other to conduct the “restless rearticulations” (Rothberg) of their memory, attempting to employ the creativity of such relatedness to confine the ‘original’ occurrence into a more definitive realm. As Benjamin tells us with regards to the work of the translator, this may “no longer be displaced by a secondary meaning.”

A relatively more generous reading, however, would also make space for what the aspiration towards likeness promises them: to submit so wholly to the perception/organization and meaning-making mechanisms of the other that one’s own articulation of their body and history and memory is no longer an “obvious necessity” (*Hiroshima*). There is a relief in giving in to “that underlying hunger for reorientation” that Gilroy locates as the driving force for melancholic articulations of memory.

In the fascinated enunciation of “*Ne-vers!*” and “*Hi-ro-shi-ma!*”, the unnamed and irreverently metonymized-mystified characters find a point from which to begin (again). Ahmed tells us that this is the point “from which the world unfolds”. The (re-)tellings and (re-)doings of memory make space for the body to be lived in, for its space to be rearranged such that, in the reverberations of the other, one may find the spot of their own echo, of something recognizable and fathomable as a body of one’s – or another’s – own.





A RUSSIAN IDIOT, AN
ENGLISH IDIOT AND A TAMIL
IDIOT



SOBHANA PRAMOD

and I

all sat together in awe
my grandmother turns
to Nastasya burning rubles in a fireplace,
and then
to Manthara whispering in Kaikeyi's ears
they are women to me,
not heroines nor villains

Dostoevsky could not have been a better storyteller than my grandmother,
the Russian Idiot became the Tamil Asadan,
she translated it on paper, but etched the story in my mind.

*I do not recall a ramayana, nor a ram
I do not know the men you speak of 67*

She never spoke about the brothers,
Not ram nor his brother, (whatever his name was)

But of Sita and Urmila

Of the bonds between the women
In the garden in Ilangai with Sita
Not of men, nor of their feuds (*petty*)



*She spoke of war,
Of women*

*And I remember thinking
Sita and Sati are anagrams*

*and I remember thinking,
to listen to my grandmother
is to burn.*



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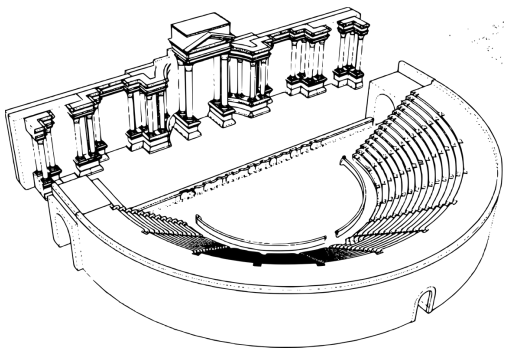
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